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ABSTRACT

This annotated bibliography lists contemporary, realistic fiction with gifted school-age protagonists. The 82 novels, published between 1946 and 1992, are arranged alphabetically by author. Each listing includes the publisher, specific talent areas, and a suggested grade-level target audience, from early elementary to senior high. The bibliography was compiled as part of a dissertation which compared fictional portrayals of gifted children with research literature, with the aim of finding titles that were authentic enough to provide gifted readers with "fictional peers" and "fictional mentors" which could be used in a bibliotherapeutic way. Dominant themes portrayed in the novels include: multipotentiality, a mentor relationship, a desire for autonomy, physical isolation, psychological alienation, intensity and exclusivity of focus, coercive egalitarianism, heightened sensitivity and awareness, perfectionism, and familial and/or peer rivalry. (JDD)

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THE GIFTED CHILD IN CONTEMPORARY FICTION: AN ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

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INTRODUCTION

The novels selected for this bibliography were chosen from almost two hundred books reviewed or recommended as being "about" gifted children. In many cases the protagonists were indeed gifted, but were placed in science fiction or fantasy settings, which did not meet the criterion for my dissertation requiring that the books be "contemporary, realistic fiction with school-age protagonists (ages 5-18)." The primary reason for insisting on realism was my intention to compare fictional portrayals with research literature in the hopes that titles could be found that were authentic enough to provide gifted readers with "fictional peers" and "fictional mentors" thereby allowing the books to serve a bibliotherapeutic function in addition to their value as enjoyable literature.

I was gratified to find a substantial number of titles available that were indeed "authentic" in their portrayal of various aspects of giftedness. A content analysis of selected titles revealed the following dominant themes:

1) multi-potentiality
2) a mentor relationship
3) a desire for autonomy
4) physical isolation
5) psychological alienation
6) intensity and exclusivity of focus
7) coercive egalitarianism
8) heightened sensitivity and awareness
9) perfectionism
10) familial and/or peer rivalry

Readers of this bibliography are no doubt familiar with many of the characteristics detailed above. It is my hope that these books can provide both an affirmation of the many positive aspects of being gifted while at the same time serving as catalysts to prompt discussion of the occasional negatives that can be so painful and problematic. Overall, I thought the books did a remarkable job of capturing the "double edged sword" that gifted children so often experience as a result of their advanced abilities and unique ways of thinking.

Annotations are listed alphabetically by author. Also included are publishing information, specific talent area(s), and a suggested target audience, although the latter is subjective, especially with gifted readers.

Although every attempt was made to make the list exhaustive, some titles were no doubt missed. Readers with suggestions are encouraged to contact me or the Minnesota Council for the Gifted and Talented. Recommendations will be included in future editions.

Appleton, Victor, II.

Tom Swift and His Diving Seacopter. Series.

New York: Grosset & Dunlop, 1956.

Special Talent: Math and Science. Elementary-Junior High.

Perhaps the seminal series honoring the intellect and inventiveness, these books all follow Tom Swift, the boy genius, as he solves the world's problems with his extraordinary mind and brilliant inventions. The language may sound dated, but the books are still fun to read and are great nostalgia.

Auel, Jean.

The Clan of the Cave Bear. Series.

New York: Crown, 1980.

General Intelligence. Creativity. Senior High.

Although set in pre-historic times, the analogy between Ayla, who is decidedly more advanced than her contemporaries, and gifted children and their age peers will be obvious and hopefully instructive to those who read this popular book.

Bottner, Barbara.

The World's Greatest Expert on Absolutely Everything Is Crying.

New York: Dell, 1986.

General Intelligence. Performing Arts. Upper Elementary.

A fine book that deals with perfectionism and the deleterious effects of unrealistic parental expectations. Katherine Ann, the new student in school, must balance her desire to be accepted among her peers with her parents extraordinary demands and her own sometimes insensitive behavior.

Brooks, Bruce.

Midnight Hour Encores.

New York: Harper & Roe, 1986.

Special Talent: Music. Junior-Senior High.

One of the few fictional titles that directly addresses the child prodigy, this is the story of Sibilance T. Spooner, world class cellist. The enormous sacrifices and total devotion as well as the rewards and satisfaction of attaining world class status are illustrated against the backdrop of a pair of mysteries about Sib's past and future.

Burningham, John. Illustrated by the author.

Time to Get Out of the Bath, Shirley.

New York: Crowell, 1978.

Special Talent: Creativity. Early elementary.

Shirley loves to daydream in the bathtub. Sometimes she forgets the time and has to be reminded to get out! An excellent book for affirming introspection, daydreaming, and one's inner self for very young readers and their parents.

Cameron, Eleanor.

A Room Made of Windows. Series.

Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1971.

Special Talent: Writing. Junior-Senior High.

This novel abounds with characters gifted in both music and literature. Julia's friend Leslie has already been published (she's thirteen) and Julia, age ten, is submitting a manuscript. This is not an easy book, but well worth the effort, especially for aspiring writers.

Cole, Brock.

Celine.

New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 1989.

Special Talent: Art. Junior-Senior High.

This book is not directly concerned with giftedness. Rather, we watch Celine, a sixteen-year-old, going through a rather difficult period in her life as she tries to deal with the various problems she encounters. Her love of art is evident throughout the book, but as background rather than the central focus. The author has won multiple awards.

Conford, Ellen.

And This is Laura.

Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1977.

General Intelligence. Upper Elementary-Junior High.

Although virtually a straight-A student, Laura feels inadequate in a family of specialized superstars. Perhaps in compensation, she becomes psychic. Eventually, her gift becomes burdensome and she finally discusses her feelings of inadequacy with her parents who are extremely affirming of her individuality, with or without her psychic abilities.

Cooney, Caroline.

Among Friends.

New York: Bantam Books, 1987.

Multiple Talents (music, writing, math, creativity). Junior-Senior High.

This novel should be required during junior or senior high as it portrays peer pressure-or, more specifically, coercive egalitarianism, with extraordinary power. Junior Jennie Quinn, an amazingly talented composer, writer, and musician finds herself more isolated with each success. In addition, her parents and school officials display her as a "trophy student," adding further to her woes. Readers may quarrel with the abrupt ending, but this title is highly recommended.

Cooney, Caroline.

Twenty Pageants Later.

New York: Bantam Books, 1991.

Language and Interpersonal relations. Junior-Senior High.

This story contrasts the accolades and acclaim given to sixteen-year-old Dane McKane, a "professional beauty contestant" to the meager recognition afforded her 8th-grade sister (and narrator) Scottie-Anne, who is merely the youngest student in the state to be accepted into Yale's Russian language program. A surprisingly engaging and even-handed examination of beauty pageants and the tension between the superficial and the substantive.

Corey, Deirde.

Friends 4-Ever Minus One.

New York: Scholastic, Inc., 1991.

General Intelligence. Middle/Upper Elementary.

G.A.S.P. (gifted and special program) is the acronym given to the middle school's gifted program our heroine Meg will be attending. She has social concerns similar to those afflicting other protagonists (see I Hate Being Gifted by Patricia Hermes), framed within a series format. This is not a serious treatment of giftedness, but should prove accessible even to readers in early elementary and has the advantage of a happy, affirming ending which might be helpful for those who have been formally identified for the first time and who are about to begin special programming.

Cresswell, Helen.

Ordinary Jack. Series.

New York: Macmillan, 1977.

Multiple Talent Areas. Junior High.

As the title implies, the narrator in this story isn't "gifted"- but everyone else in his family is. This causes Uncle Parker to create a "gift" for Jack- clairvoyance! This is a tale told largely for humor and is part of a series about the Bagthorpes, all of whom have extreme talents and idiosyncrasies to match.

Dahl, Roald. Illustrated by Quentin Blake.

Matilda.

New York: Viking Penguin, Inc., 1988.

General Intelligence. Elementary.

Throughout the early chapters of this book, Dahl paints an incredibly touching portrait of an astonishingly gifted child virtually raising herself in a home that is decidedly anti-intellectual (the term "toxic parents" comes to mind). Later chapters become more fanciful, but no less amusing or effective. Highly recommended as a read aloud for early primary.

Danziger, Paula.

The Cat Ate My Gymsuit. Sequel.

New York: Dell, 1974.

Special Talent: Verbal. Upper elementary.

Marcy Lewis has a poor self image, largely because of her weight and unpopularity. She is very bright, however, and really begins to use her abilities when her English teacher is removed from class and Marcy takes on the adult establishment in an attempt to have her reinstated.

Dixon, Franklin W.

The Shattered Helmet. Series.

New York: Grosset & Dunlop, 1973.

General Intelligence. Upper Elementary.

Although perhaps not timeless literature, this series was among the first and most popular to portray intelligence and creativity as desirable traits useful in solving both everyday and life-threatening situations. An excellent bridge to more challenging literature. Despite the formulaic nature of these books, they provide good introductory role models.

Fitzgerald, John. Illustrated by Mercer Mayer.

The Great Brain. Series.

New York: Dell, !967.

General Intelligence. Elementary.

Set in turn-of-the-century Utah, this series tells of Tom - the "Great Brain" - and the various nefarious schemes he hatches that utilize his intelligence - usually for profit. This is all in fun and makes for easy and enjoyable reading.

Fitzhugh, Louise. Illustrated by the author.

Harriet the Spy.

New York: Harper & Row, 1964.

Special Talent: Verbal. Upper Elementary.

To exercise her writing abilities, Harriet keeps a candid diary containing covert observations about her neighbors and classmates. All is well until the diary is discovered. Harriet is then persuaded to use her abilities in more constructive and less injurious ways. An excellent look at a child who is determined to be an author.

Fitzhugh, Louise.
Nobody's Family is Going to Change.
New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1974.
General Intelligence. Special Talent: Dancing. Upper Elementary.
Another fine book by the author of Harriet the Spy, this is the story of would-be lawyer Emma and her brother Willie, an aspiring dancer. Since these are not stereotypical occupations, both kids encounter resistance and need lots of perseverance to pursue their dreams. A cautionary tale for parents who want their gifted children to be conventional.

Gardam, Jane.
Bilgewater.
New York: Willow Books, 1977.
General Intelligence. Junior High.
Although highly intelligent, Bilgewater is dyslexic. This problem masks her intelligence and adds to her feelings of isolation. She must battle both her handicap and her isolation to gain self-confidence. An excellent choice for children bearing the burden of a "double label".

Greene, Bette. Illustrated by Charles Lilly.
Phillip Hall Likes Me. I Reckon Maybe. Sequel.
New York: Dell, 1974.
General Intelligence. Middle and Upper Elementary.
Beth and Philip are the two smartest kids in class, as well as rivals for most of the trophies and ribbons in school. If Beth has her way, they may someday become more than friends. But first Beth will have to learn to stop allowing Philip to win all the time, and Philip will have to learn he can't always be first.

Greene, Constance C. Illustrated by Byron Barton.
A Girl Called Al. Series.
New York: Viking, 1969.
General Intelligence. Upper elementary.
Al is "a little on the fat side and a nonconformist". She is also very bright and not a little lonely. Through conversations reported by the book's unnamed narrator we watch Al deal with her weight, her isolation, and her entry into junior high. She receives help from Mr. Richards, the janitor in her building. This is the first book in the series.

Greenwald, Sheila.
Will the Real Gertrude Hollings Please Stand Up?
Boston: Little, Brown, 1983.
General Intelligence. Upper Elementary-Junior High.
Gertrude Hollings, considered learning disabled and an outcast at school but loved and cherished at home, must spend three weeks with her "perfect" and very competitive cousin Albert. To their mutual surprise, they find they can learn from one another. An excellent book to promote discussions about labels and stereotypes.

Gripe, Maria. Translated by Paul Britten Austin. Ill. by Harald Gripe.
Hugo and Josephine.
New York: Delacorte, 1962.
Special Talent: Leadership. Psycho/Social. Early elementary.
This is a story from Sweden about timid Josephine, who finds school easy but friendships difficult until the arrival of classmate Hugo. Hugo's quiet but fierce independence helps Josephine become accepted despite her shyness and love of books.

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Hamilton, Virginia.

The Planet of Junior Brown.

New York: Dell, 1971.

Special Talent: Music. Junior High.

Junior Brown is prodigious: in girth, ability, and degree of mental instability. His talents are not being realized and very few people are interested in or capable of understanding him. He does receive help however, from two unlikely sources: a street-wise classmate and the school janitor.

Hermes, Patricia.

I Hate Being Gifted.

G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1990.

General Intelligence. Upper Elementary.

Sixth grader K. T. has been accepted for the "learning activities program" (L.E.A.P.), which delights her parents but has K. T. fearing she will lose her friends, who may consider her a " leap creep." This book can serve as a light-hearted introduction to a serious issue: peer pressure toward the gifted child.

Hodges, Margaret. Illustrated by W.T. Mars.

The Hatching of Joshua Cobb.

New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1967.

Special Talent: Leadership. Psycho/Social. Early elementary.

Joshua's first summer camp is difficult until new counselor Dusty arrives. Josh looks up to him and would like to win a race in his honor. This proves impossible, as he finishes second each time. Dusty is able to help Josh resolve his disappointment, which should be instructive for young readers with a tendency toward perfectionism.

Hoover, H. M.

Treasures of the Morrow.

New York: Four Winds Press, 1976.

General Intelligence. Junior High.

This science fiction story, set in a post-holocaust society, tells of Tia and Rabbit, two gifted children who must escape their backward homeland where intelligence is reviled, to reach the land of Morrow, where intelligence is revered. The stark contrast between the two worlds may help gifted kids understand the ambivalence toward giftedness they may encounter.

Howe, James.

Eat Your Poison, Dear. Series.

New York: Atheneum, 1986.

General Intelligence. Upper Elementary-Junior High.

A "Sebastion Barth" mystery wherein Sebastion and his friends try to determine who is responsible for a series of lunchroom poisonings. Played entirely for fun, this series is in the mold of The Hardy Boys, but more contemporary.

Hughes, Dean. Illustrated by Blanche Sims.

Nutty For President. Series.

New York: Bantam, 1981.

General Intelligence. Upper Elementary.

Nutty Nutshell and his friends all attend the campus lab school and are all quite bright. No one, however, holds a candle to William Bilks, classmate and absolute genius. In William's role as advisor, he helps our hero realize most of his schemes. These stories are all in fun, but stress intelligence and problem solving.

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Hunter, Mollie.

A Sound of Chariots.

New York: Harper & Row, 1972.

Special Talent: Verbal. Junior-Senior High.

The title, an allusion to the poem "To His Coy Mistress", embodies one of the themes - productive use of time - in this complex and beautiful novel. The self-actualization of narrator Bridie McShane is another major theme. She must overcome her father's death, adult insensitivity, and alienation from her peers before she can begin to realize her dreams.

Hurwitz, Johanna.

Class Clown.

New York: Scholastic Inc., 1987.

General Intelligence. Underachievement. Lower-Middle Elementary.

Class Clown is the first in a series dealing with Lucas, Cricket, Zoe, and Julio as they progress from third through fifth grade. The titles foreshadow the conflicts and major plot points. All three books are easy to read and can serve as catalysts for discussions about underachievement, perfectionism, and leadership skills respectively (see annotations that follow).

Hurwitz, Johanna. Illustrated by Sheila Hamanaka.

Class President.

New York: Morrow Junior Books, 1990.

Special Talent: Leadership. Middle-Upper Elementary.

This is the story of Julio Sanchez, who is the manager for former class clown Lucas Cott in his campaign to defeat former teacher's pet Cricket Kaufman for fifth grade president. This book neatly ties the characters together while highlighting Julio's growing understanding that he can provide better leadership than either candidate despite their superior academic ability. All three books work well together, but can also be enjoyed separately.

Hurwitz, Johanna. Illustrated by Sheila Hamanaka.

Teacher's Pet.

New York: Morrow Junior Books, 1988.

General Intelligence. Perfectionism. Middle-Upper Elementary.

The strongest of Hurwitz's trilogy reviewed here (a fourth has also been written), Teacher's Pet addresses perfectionism and the attendant troubles (jealousy, hyper-competitiveness, peer difficulties) that may afflict gifted children. Cricket Kaufman has become so accustomed to being the unchallenged class leader that the appearance of transfer student Zoe Mitchell- whom Cricket should welcome as an ability peer- is perceived as a threat. It takes Cricket months to drop her defenses and learn to appreciate Zoe. A delightful bonus true of all three of these books is the portrayal of truly gifted teachers who play integral roles in their student's lives.

Keene, Carolyn.

The Thirteenth Pearl.

New York: Grosset & Dunlop, 1979.

General Intelligence. Upper Elementary.

Another seminal series that exalts deductive abilities and intelligence as worthwhile attributes to possess. As with the Hardy Boys and Tom Swift, these books can function as a bridge to more difficult books as children's interests change and develop.

Key, Alexander.

The Forgotten Door.

Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1965.

General Intelligence. Upper Elementary.

A boy with amazing powers and intelligence comes to earth by accident through a "forgotten door." His abilities are viewed with suspicion by virtually everyone, until a sympathetic family embraces him and helps him return to his home planet.

Keys, Daniel.

Flowers for Algernon. (Entitled "Charlie" as a movie).

New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1966.

General Intelligence.

An open plea for tolerance of differences and the humane use of science, this seminal work tells the story of Charlie Gordon, a mildly retarded man who is given the "opportunity" to become exceedingly brilliant by virtue of an experimental operation. An extremely powerful book/movie combination.

Knowles, John.

A Separate Peace.

New York: The Macmillan Company, 1960.

Special Talent: Leadership. Psychomotor. Junior-Senior High.

Although this novel was not intended specifically for the young adult market, all the major characters are teens, and the two protagonists, Gene and Finny, are very bright. Finny is not just bright but has astonishing instincts and charisma, which causes much jealousy and leads ultimately to tragedy with a violent form of coercive egalitarianism.

Konigsburg, E.L. Illustrated by the author.

From the Mixed-up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler.

New York: Atheneum, 1967.

General Intellectual Ability. Upper elementary.

Tired of being "Straight A's Claudia Kincaid," Claudia persuades her brother to run away with her. They reside in New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art for a week where they solve a number of mysteries and learn about themselves in the process. Written by an award-winning author who consistently addresses issues of concern to gifted kids. This one was a Newbery winner.

Konigsburg, E.L. Illustrated by the author.

George.

New York: Dell, 1970.

General Intelligence. Identity. Upper Elementary.

Sixth grader Ben Carr is very bright and very imaginative. He is also quite troubled. His imagination has become a liability, as he struggles with his alter ego, "George" for control of his personality. He has additional difficulties with his lab partner, William, an older student who intends to fabricate a science project. This book is a well-written, serious treatment of a very gifted but troubled young boy.

Krumgold, Joseph. Illustrated by Alvin Smith.

Henry 3.

New York: Atheneum, 1967.

General Intelligence. Upper Elementary.

Henry views his 154 I.Q. as a handicap and makes it a practice to hide his intelligence whenever possible. Fellow student and trouble maker Fletcher Larkin has discovered Henry's secret, however, and intends to reveal the horrible fact of Henry's intellect! One of the major conflicts regarding a fall-out shelter is dated, but the majority of the book, which has to do with "fitting in" still rings true. The author has twice been awarded the Newbery medal for children's fiction.

L'Engle, Madeleine.

A Wrinkle in Time.

New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1962.

General Intelligence. Creativity. Upper Elementary.

Ground breaking and time honored, this story, its sequels, and much of L'Engle's other works offer protagonists who are both gifted and valued for their gifts within stories that are extremely well-written and a joy to read. A Wrinkle in Time won the Newbery award in 1963.

LeGuin, Ursula. Illustrated by James Brunsman.

Leese Webster.

New York: Atheneum, 1979.

Special Talent: Creativity. Preschool-Kindergarten.

A creative spider decides to spin beautiful variations from her traditional web. With assistance, students can see that being creative - or just being different - is something that should not merely be tolerated, but celebrated!

LeGuin, Ursula K.

Very Far Away from Anywhere Else.

New York: Atheneum, 1976.

General Intelligence. Music and Science. Junior High.

This is the story of two gifted teens, Owen Griffiths and Natalie Fields. It is Natalie, a gifted musician, who helps Owen embrace his intelligence and become more accepting of himself and his abilities. This is also a touching love story.

Leviten, Sonia.

The Mark of Conte.

New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1976.

General Intelligence. Junior-Senior High.

A mildly satiric look at high school life through the eyes of Conte Mark, who through computer error has received two class schedules which he intends to follow simultaneously, thereby eliminating the necessity of a senior year. There are lots of bright kids in this book (in fact, they pretty much run the school) and they are all fun to read about.

Lowry, Lois.

Anatasia Krupnik.

Boston: Houghton Mifflen, 1979.

Special Talents: Verbal. Upper Elementary.

Anatasia loves to write and records her loves, hates, favorite words, and life's trials and tribulations in her notebook. An interesting and all-too-common conflict occurs between Anatasia and her teacher, who feels all poems must rhyme. Fortunately, her teacher later makes an effort to be kind, and Anatasia's parents are extremely supportive throughout.

MacLachlan, Patricia.

The Facts and Fictions of Minna Pratt.

New York: Harper & Row, 1988.

Special Talent: Music. General Intelligence. Upper Elementary.

Minna is surrounded by gifted and talented people: her mother is an author, her father is a psychologist, her ten-year-old brother McGrew "knows everything" and she plays in a quartet of very talented musicians. She holds her own in this talented group as she practices her cello in search of the vibrato that "will allow her to play Mozart as he deserves to be played."

Mahy, Margaret.
The Tricksters.
New York: Scholastic, 1987.
Special Talent: Verbal. Junior-Senior High.
While on vacation, seventeen-year-old Harry and her family encounter three strangers. Harry, who is writing a novel, has insight into who and what the strangers are, and becomes involved with them despite the dangers they may bring. Author Mahy incorporates elements of the supernatural into this story.

Manes, Stephen.
Be a Perfect Person in Just Three Days!
New York: Bantam, 1982.
General Intelligence. Elementary.
A lighthearted look at the pitfalls of perfectionism, as Milo, with help from a clever professor in a book, finds that actually being perfect would be boring. A non-threatening way to approach a difficult and problematic subject.

McDaniel, Lurlene.
More Than Just a Smart Girl.
WilloWisp Press, Inc., 1987.
General Intelligence. Upper Elementary-Junior High.
This novel-a series romance- probably has a limited audience, but in an attempt to create a thorough bibliography it was included. Alissa has been promoted from 7th grade to high school and is stunned to find Derek Lanier, the star football player, is interested in her! Derek has a hidden agenda which almost breaks young Alissa's heart, until she meets Steve Thomas, who appreciates that she is...more than just a smart girl!

McDermott, Gerald.
Anansi the Spider: A Tale from the Ashanti. Illustrated by the author.
New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston. 1972.
Multiple Talents: Preschool-Kindergarten.
This folk tale tells of the rescue of Anansi from the inside of a fish, thanks to the heroics of his sons, each of whom is endowed with a unique talent. A good way to encourage children to embrace their individuality.

O'Brien, Robert C. Illustrated by Zena Bernstein.
Mrs. Frisby and the Rats of NIMH.
New York: Atheneum, 1971.
General (enhanced) Intelligence. Upper Elementary.
The rats in the title are escapees from the National Institute of Mental Health, where experiments have greatly enhanced their intellect. How they utilize their abilities to outwit and evade their would-be captors comprises the majority of this adventure.

Oneal, Zibby.
In Summer Light.
New York: Bantam Books.
Special Talent: Art. Junior-Senior High.
An interesting look at giftedness through the eyes of talented but intimidated seventeen-year-old Kate Brewer. Her father is Marcus Brewer, world famous artist and a very powerful figure. With help from Ian, who is serving as an intern with Marcus, Kate begins to forge an identity separate from her father which eventually allows her to begin painting again.

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Oneal, Zibby.
The Language of Goldfish.
New York: Viking, 1980.
Special Talent: Math. Art. Junior High.
A multi-faceted look at giftedness from an author who consistently addresses such issues with insight and sensitivity. This novel tells the story of Carrie Stokes's battles with anxiety and alienation severe enough to cause her to seek therapy. Her fight to overcome her problems could prove helpful to others with similar difficulties.

Paterson, Katherine. Illustrated by Donna Diamond.
A Bridge to Terabithia.
New York: Crowell, 1977.
General Intelligence. Creativity. Visual Arts. Upper Elementary.
Jess feels isolated at home and at school. It isn't until Leslie comes and creates Terabithia that Jess begins to feel appreciated for who he really is. They become virtually inseparable. Then Jess has an opportunity to spend a day with Miss Edmunds, his favorite teacher, at an art gallery. While he is away tragedy strikes and Jess must learn to be strong alone.

Paterson, Katherine.
Come Sing, Jimmy Jo.
New York: Dutton, 1985.
Special Talent: Music. Upper Elementary.
James Johnson-"Jimmy Jo"-comes from a family of singers, but it isn't until a new agent encourages him to join his family on stage that his giftedness becomes a blessing and a curse. He must fight to express his giftedness and maintain his identity despite the difficulties inherent in being a celebrity.

Paterson, Katherine.
Jacob I Have Loved.
New York: Crowell, 1980.
General Intelligence. Music. Junior High.
The second Newbery winner for Paterson, this is a story of sibling rivalry through the eyes of "older" twin Louise, who is jealous and resentful of her sister. It isn't until late in her teens that Louise is able to realize her own abilities and escape the long shadow cast by her twin.

Paterson, Katherine.
The Great Gilly Hopkins.
New York: Crowell, 1978.
General Intelligence. Upper Elementary.
This book deals with race, class, and adoption issues as seen through the eyes of abandoned and embittered young Gilly Hopkins. Gilly uses her intelligence to outwit adults, frustrate teachers, and torment children until, at long last, she meets loving, wise, accepting Maimie Trotter. Unfortunately, one of Gilly's past misdeeds will come back to haunt her.

Peck, Richard.

Remembering the Good Times.

New York: Delacorte, 1985.

General Intelligence. Junior-Senior High.

Narrator Buck Mendenhall, Kate Lucas, and gifted Trav Kirby have been friends since junior high and are about to start their sophomore year together. It is the second day of school when Buck and Kate are told that Trav has killed himself. Despite plentiful foreshadowing, Trav's death is still shocking. The aftermath is brutal as well, with Trav's parents and the school officials trading accusations. The author intended the book as a strong warning about suicide among (gifted) young people, and he has succeeded. Highly recommended for those willing to deal with suicide and the pressures that are so often involved in this most tragic of choices.

Pfeffer, Susan Beth.

Dear Dad, Love Laura.

New York: Scholastic, Inc., 1989.

General Intelligence, persistence, creativity.

Laurie is a sixth grader who feels victimized twice: her parents have recently divorced and she has been excluded from the gifted and talented program based on tests and grades that were compromised by her parent's separation. She relates her thoughts and feelings in letters to her father which gradually reveal her adjustment to the divorce as well as her steadfast determination to be accepted into the g&t program. This novel might serve as a companion piece (and counterpoint) to I Hate Being Gifted.

Peyton, K. M.

The Beethoven Medal.

New York: Crowell, 1971.

Special Talent: Music. Junior High.

A sequel to Pennington's Last Term, this story tells of the enormous dedication and frequent conflicts involved in the pursuit of a passion. Patrick Pennington must balance work and his love for the piano if he is to maintain his scholarship and become a concert performer.

Rand, Ayn.

Anthem.

New York: New American Library, 1946.

General Intelligence. Junior-Senior High.

Although Rand's theme, as always, is the individual against the collective, this early novel does a wonderful job of dealing with coercive egalitarianism in its most brutal and overt form. Virtually every gifted child will deal with this at some point, and it might be instructive to see the phenomena in pure form.

Rodgers, Mary. Illustrated by the author.

Freaky Friday.

New York: Harper & Row, 1972.

General Intelligence. Upper Elementary.

One of the first books to employ the gimmick of switching bodies and minds- in this case Annabel Andrews with her mother- this book makes points about empathy, sensitivity, and using one's abilities, all in enjoyable fashion. Also a Disney movie.

Sachar, Louis.
Someday Angeline.
Avon Books, 1983.
Multipotentiality. General Intelligence (prodigy). Middle-Upper Elementary.
The jacket cover states, "Sometimes being too smart can be worse than being not smart enough." Relative to school and her social life, this seems to be true for Angeline, an eight-year-old whose first spoken word was "octopus" and who has been accelerated to sixth grade "...because, well, they had to put her somewhere and they didn't know where else to put her." Although this is not a serious treatment of either acceleration or prodigies (it's actually a pretty funny book), for younger readers it might provoke thoughtful discussion about some of the social issues related to being "too smart".

Salinger, J. D.
The Catcher in the Rye.
Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1951.
General Intelligence. Junior-Senior High.
Perhaps the first "young adult" novel, this is the classic, often censored and always controversial story of Holden Caulfield, one of America's first alienated gifted kids. As sarcastic, vulgar, and profane as Holden can be it is also obvious that he is bright, sensitive, and concerned with justice. The book is currently in its sixty-ninth printing.

Sebestyen, Ouida.
Words by Heart.
Boston: Little, Brown, 1968.
General Intelligence. Upper Elementary-Junior High.
Racial prejudice and small-minded envy make life difficult and ultimately tragic for Lena and her family. Lena's courage and willingness to express her abilities despite formidable obstacles is inspiring, as is her relationship with her heroic father. The ending is one of the most powerful displays of integrity and courage one can hope to find in a novel.

Sendak, Maurice. Illustrated by the author.
The Sign on Rosie's Door.
New York: Harper & Roe, 1960.
Special Talent: Creativity. Preschool-Kindergarten.
Rosie is the neighborhood's most creative child, using her imagination to delight and entertain her friends during the long days of summer vacation.

Shreve, Susan. Illustrated by Diane deGroat.
The Flunking of Joshua T. Bates.
New York: Scholastic Inc., 1984.
General Intelligence. Middle Elementary.
Despite his intelligence, Joshua flunks third grade. He learns this depressing fact on Labor day, just before school resumes. Fortunately for Josh and his family, his new teacher, Mrs. Goodwin, sets out to correct the injustice done to Josh the previous year. With her help, Josh is able to pass the necessary tests and is promoted to fourth grade in less than three months.

Simon, Seymour. Illustrated by Fred Winkowski
Einstein Anderson, Super Sleuth. Series.
New York: Viking, 1980.
General Intelligence. Science. Elementary.
This series features Einstein Anderson solving various puzzles and problems by applying scientific principles, logic, and his deductive abilities. In this book, he solves ten mysteries by applying his knowledge of anatomy, technology, physics, acrobatics, zoology, meteorology, and biology!

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Sinykin, Sheri Cooper.
The Buddy Trap.
New York: Atheneum, 1991.
Special Talent: Music(Flute). Upper Elementary/Junior High.
Wow! Here is an adopted, Korean, flute-playing, rather unathletic hero. Cam has been deposited at Camp Rainbow Lake as a forced change of pace from music camp (where he'd much rather be). Again, the struggle to fit in with (age) peers is one of the major conflicts, along with Cam's slow realization that popularity is not worth his integrity. As the campers struggle to discard their respective labels and see each other as people, we see Cam slowly come into his own.

Smith, Doris Buchanan.
Dreams and Drummers.
New York: Crowell, 1978.
Special Talents: Music, Verbal, and Science. Upper Elementary-Junior High.
Perfectionism, multi-dimensionality, and the sometimes confusing gap between ability and maturation are all explored as fourteen-year-old Stephanie Stone tries to negotiate the often treacherous waters of junior high school. A direct look at some of the more important issues in the field by a talented author.

Snyder, Zilpha Keatley.
Libby on Wednesday.
New York: Delacorte Press, 1990.
Special Talent: Writing. Upper Elementary- Junior High
Libby is an 8th grader attending public school for the first time after years of intense home schooling. She is shocked when she discovers her knowledge, abilities, and enthusiasm are distained, rather than appreciated as they have been all her life. Tremendous conflicts are averted when Libby joins a writing group that meets each Wednesday. The group resembles an intellectual's "breakfast club" and it is here that Libby feels free to reveal her true abilities and passions. The book is a strong argument for pull-out programs and a lot of fun well.

Sonnenmark, Laura A.
Something's Rotten in the State of Maryland.
New York: Scholastic, Inc., 1990.
Special Talent: Writing. Drama and Theater. Junior-Senior High.
Marie is typical of far too many talented students- trying to "fit in" by hiding her abilities to appease her peers-especially her boyfriend Brian, who takes a dim(witted) view of Marie's emerging fame as a playwrite. Although some may feel the author is guilty of stereotyping athletes as well as "brains," I would argue that she has captured the cliques that are so pervasive in school with dramatic and delightful effect. Little does Marie, our "reluctant heroine" (as described on the book's cover), realize that her re-write of Hamlet will dramatically change her life. A bit contrived, but a lot of fun!

Sobol, Donald J. Illustrated by Leonard Shortall.
Encyclopedia Brown, Boy Detective. Series.
New York: Bantam, 1963.
General Intelligence. Elementary.
Leroy Brown, son of Idaville's police chief, is "Encyclopedia", so named because of his tremendous intellect and reasoning power. Most of these books come with ten "cases," so readers can match wits with the amazing Leroy. Solutions are then given.

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Stine, Megan, and Stine, H. William.
How I Survived Fifth Grade.
Troll Associates, 1992.
General Intelligence. Middle-Upper Elementary.
Elliot is both the smartest and shortest kid in 5th grade, and he has a problem: the class bully, Justin Ambrose, has chosen him as his personal victim for the year. Since Elliot can't defeat Justin physically he must outsmart him. That is the major conflict in this short novel. Although the stereotypes are a bit discomfiting, Elliot is an enjoyable narrator, and everything works out by book's end.

Stone, Bruce.
Been Clever Forever.
New York: Harper & Row, 1988.
General Intelligence. Junior-Senior High.
This book has been described as "A younger brother to Catch-22," but it seemed more like an updated Cather in the Rye to me. Our gifted narrator, Stephen A. Douglass, is caught in a vortex of forces: his divorced parents are both going through middle ages crises, the school administration, a maniacal teacher and a student activist all have designs on him, and he's flirting with becoming a media star. Although there is considerable humor and absurdity, the author makes some serious points about (wasted) potential, expectations, and the difficulties of life as a non-conformist.

Thompson, Julian F.
Simon Pure.
New York: Scholastic, 1987.
General Intelligence. Junior-Senior High.
Radical acceleration is dealt with in this very light-hearted tale of Simon Storm, a fifteen-year-old college freshman. For Simon, classes are the least of his problems, what with woman trouble, his participation in a study of prodigies, and the possible takeover of the college by extremist republicans.

Tolan, Stephanie.
A Time to Fly Free.
New York: Scribner, 1983.
General Intelligence. Upper Elementary.
Josh Taylor is both highly intelligent and almost unbearably sensitive. These two traits cause Josh to "drop-out" of fifth grade- he simply walks away. With the insightful support of his stepfather, Josh is allowed a school "sabbatical" while more suitable arrangements are made. Initially by chance and then through sheer persistence, Josh becomes involved with Rafferty, a like-minded individual who becomes a mentor and powerful advocate for Josh. This book is hard to summarize but is probably the most authentic, fully developed, and beautifully written of the books surveyed. The author is both a writer and consultant who specializes in working with the highly gifted, and her dual specialties serve her well in A Time to Fly Free. Highest recommendation!

Tolan, Stephanie S.
No Safe Harbors.
New York: Fawcett Juniper, 1981.
General Intelligence. Special Talents: Science. Moral Reasoning. Junior-Senior High.
Coping skills and moral reasoning are emphasized in this novel. Narrator Amanda Sterling, her ten-year-old brother Doug, and new acquaintance Joe Schmidt all have difficulties due to aspects of their giftedness. Although Doug is not the protagonist, Tolan's depiction of his absolute passion for science is delightful, and Amanda's struggle with a moral dilemma is absorbing.

Voigt, Cynthia.

Come A Stranger. (See also Dicey's Song and other titles by Ms. Voigt).

New York: Ballantine Books, 1987.

Special Talent: Dance. General Intelligence. Upper Elementary-Junior High.

Like all of Ms. Voigt's wonderful books, Come A Stranger is about many things. Mina is a very capable - but not a gifted- dancer. When she fails to be promoted with the rest of her class, she is not sure if she is a victim of prejudice or diminishing skill. Mina comes to terms with her heritage and her abilities in this fine story.

Williams, Jay and Abrashkin, Raymond.

Danny Dunn and the Homework Machine.

New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1958.

Special Talent: Science. Elementary.

A great book for students frustrated with "busy work", this is the story of Danny and his friends as they wrestle with the technical and ethical issues surrounding the invention of a "homework machine" that will eliminate the (needless) repetition of problems they already know the answers to.

Williams-Garcia, Rita.

Fast Talk on a Slow Track.

Lodestar Books, 1991.

General Intelligence. Junior-Senior High.

The author wrote this book expressly for "...bright young men who are suddenly caught off guard by failure." Class valedictorian Danzel Watson has never experienced the "humiliation" of failure until he tries to bluff his way through orientation at Princeton. His immature reaction costs him dearly and forces him to confront himself for the first time in his life. This is one of the few books featuring an older protagonist and is also an excellent multi-cultural selection.

Wolff, Virginia Euwer.

The Mozart Season.

New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1991.

Special Talent: Music. Upper Elementary-Junior High.

This beautiful novel details the 6th grade summer of twelve-year-old Allegra Shapiro, who is the youngest violinist in a state-wide competition to be held on Labor day. In addition to being extremely well-written, this is the only title in memory that features a gifted child who has virtually no conflicts specifically related to her abilities. Allegra is consistently affirmed by her parents and peers. Rather than finding this unrealistic, I found it refreshing and enjoyable. Further, a major theme involves "losing" with dignity and grace, a message worth hearing for many (gifted) kids.

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The previous titles are derived from dissertation research and are current as of January, 1992. Readers interested in the results of the study and its implications for use with gifted children are encouraged to call Stephen Schroeder-Davis at (612) 441-1003 (x189).

Readers wishing specific recommendations regarding appropriate titles for a variety of target audiences may call the above number or write to the author at VandenBerge Jr. High, 948 Proctor Ave., Elk River, MN. 55330.

Presentations regarding this list for bibliotherapeutic or instructional uses can be arranged by contacting the author.

Additional copies of these annotations may be obtained by writing the Minnesota Council for the Gifted and Talented, 5701 Normandale Road, Minneapolis, MN. or calling (612) 927-9546. Please enclose $10.00 per copy and add $1.00 postage for each copy you order.

Stephen Schroeder-Davis is an English teacher and coordinator of gifted programs for I.S.D. #728, in Elk River. In addition, he is an adjunct professor of literature and gifted studies at St. Mary's College and the University of St. Thomas. He currently serves on the board of the Minnesota Council for the Gifted and Talented. This annotated bibliography is part of his doctoral thesis and is intended as a fund raiser for the M.C.G.T.

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